

Nutrients and Foods for Health

Nutrition is the food you eat and how the body uses it. Food provides many different substances called nutrients. The body needs nutrients to build, maintain, and repair tissues. Altogether there are some 45 nutrients necessary for growth, development, and good health.

No one food contains all nutrients in the exact amount required by the body. A good diet will include a variety of foods that together will supply all nutrients needed.

Here are some nutrients you need, what they do for you, and some foods that supply them.



Protein Builds and repairs all body tissues—skin, bone, hair, blood, muscle, etc. Helps form antibodies to fight infection. Is a part of hormones and enzymes which are responsible for regulating body functions such as digestion and growth. May be used to furnish energy (calories). Good sources are meat; fish; poultry; eggs; dried peas and beans (especially soybeans); milk and milk products; peanut butter; and nuts.



Fat Supplies a large amount of energy in a small amount of food. Some fats carry vitamins A, D, E, and K. Needed for a healthy skin. Helps delay hunger feelings. Many medical authorities recommend that no more than 35% of the calories eaten in a day come from fat. Good sources are oil; shortening; butter; margarine; bacon; visible fat on meat; chocolate; and nuts.



Carbohydrate Supplies food energy. Helps the body make the best use of other nutrients. Good sources are cereal grains; sugar and sweets; rice; pastas; selected fruits as bananas and dried fruits; and selected vegetables as potatoes, corn, and lima beans.



Calcium Helps build strong bones and teeth. Helps blood clot. Helps muscles and nerves function normally. Needed to activate certain enzymes which help change food into energy. Good sources are milk and milk products as cheese; sardines and shellfish; green leafy vegetables as turnip, spinach, and mustard greens.



Phosphorus Helps build strong bones and teeth. Needed by certain enzymes which help change food into energy. Good sources are meat; fish; poultry; dried peas and beans; milk and milk products; egg yolk; and whole grain bread and cereal.



Iron Combines with protein to make hemoglobin, the red substance in the blood that carries oxygen from lungs to cells, and myoglobin which stores oxygen in muscles. Needed to prevent iron deficiency anemia. Good sources are liver; red meats; shellfish; egg yolk; dark green leafy vegetables; dried peas and beans; dried prunes, raisins, and apricots; molasses; and whole grain and enriched bread and cereal.



Iodine Necessary for proper functioning of thyroid gland. Prevents some forms of goiter. Good sources are seafoods and iodized table salt.



Thiamin Promotes normal appetite and digestion. Necessary for a healthy nervous system. Needed in certain enzymes which help change food into energy. Good sources are liver; meat (especially pork); dried peas and beans; wheat germ; and whole grain and enriched bread and cereal.



Riboflavin Helps cells use oxygen. Helps maintain good vision. Needed for smooth skin. Helps prevent scaling or cracking of skin around mouth and nose. Needed in certain enzymes which help change food into energy. Good sources are liver; milk and milk products as cheese; green leafy vegetables; meat; eggs; whole grain and enriched bread and cereal.



Niacin Promotes normal appetite and digestion. Necessary for a healthy nervous system. Needed in certain enzymes which help change food into energy. Good sources are liver; meat; fish; poultry; green vegetables; nuts (especially peanuts); whole grain bread and cereal (except corn); and enriched bread and cereal.



Vitamin C (Ascorbic Acid) Helps bind cells together and strengthens walls of blood vessels. Needed for healthy gums. Helps body resist infection. Promotes healing of wounds and cuts. Good sources are certain fruits and vegetables as citrus fruits and juices; broccoli; strawberries; tomatoes; cauliflower; cabbage; melons; green leafy vegetables; and potatoes.



Vitamin A Helps keep the skin healthy. Protects against night blindness. Needed for normal vision. Promotes growth and development. Helps build resistance to infection. Good sources are liver; fish liver oils; dark green leafy vegetables; deep yellow fruits and vegetables; egg yolk; butter; fortified margarine; whole milk; and vitamin A fortified skim milk.



Vitamin D Helps the body absorb calcium and phosphorus which build strong bones and teeth. Good sources are vitamin D fortified milk; liver; fish liver oils; and egg yolk.

OTHER IMPORTANT NUTRIENTS INCLUDE: Vitamin B₆, Vitamin B₁₂, Folic Acid, Vitamin E, Vitamin K, Magnesium